

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

More Information about the Policy

Copies of the Policy and the Framework for implementing it are available at <http://www.epa.gov/publicinvolvement/policy2003/policy2003.pdf> and <http://www.epa.gov/publicinvolvement/policy2003/framework.pdf>

The Website for the "Internet Dialogue on Public Involvement in EPA Decisions" is <http://www.network-democracy.org/epa-pip>

EPA's Response to Comments on the Draft 2000 Public Involvement Policy is available at <http://www.epa.gov/publicinvolvement/policy2003/response.pdf>

How to Identify People to Involve

"Involvement brings the pieces together" artwork is the creation of Erica Ann Turner, who contributed the work through an agreement between the Art Institute of Washington and EPA.



Involvement brings the pieces together

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Step 2: Identify the Interested and Affected Public

Goal:

- To identify groups or individuals who may have an interest in, or who may, because of their location, purposes, or activities, be affected by or interested in an upcoming EPA activity or action

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued its new Public Involvement Policy in June 2003. The Policy's overall goal is for excellent public involvement to become an integral part of EPA's culture, thus supporting more effective Agency decisions and actions.

The Policy provides guidance to EPA managers and staff on how you can better involve the public in the Agency's decision making. The Policy outlines seven steps to effective involvement. This brochure (one in a series) offers suggestions to help you "get started" identifying the interested and affected people who should have the opportunity to engage in your activities and processes.

Why Identify the Interested and Affected Public?

Identifying the interested and affected public is the cornerstone of public involvement processes. Get this step right and everything else will be easier; get it wrong and your process will fail. If you have the wrong people join in, you'll gather incomplete information, miss critical input, and end with a decision that you cannot carry out.

This step enables EPA to have direct exchanges of information, feedback, and involvement with people our decisions may affect. It helps EPA to base its decisions on the best available information and feedback and sets the conditions for the effective use of limited time and resources.

"Community-based organizations are essential to identify and get the community involved. EPA has to work with community-supported organizations if you really want involvement."

Connie Tucker, Southern Organizing Committee for Economic and Social Justice
Dialogue on Public Involvement in EPA Decisions

Plan Your Work

How to Identify the Interested and Affected Public

- Familiarize yourself with the community, its history, groups, and issues related to your involvement activities.
- Research how the community and affected public receive information and learn which sources they trust (social, civic or faith-based groups, events, or media such as newspapers, TV, radio or the Internet).
- Contact community groups and leaders, individual stakeholders, experts, local officials, environmental organizations, and tribes to measure interest in the program issues and involvement activities and to request help reaching their members and others they believe might have interest.
- Communicate with other agencies and EPA staff who may have worked on similar public involvement activities or with similar audiences to obtain their advice and help reach people and organizations.
- Look at past decision documents (environmental impact statements and grants).
- Look at local directories and public records.
- Contact people and groups that hold all views, including those likely to challenge the Agency's practices.

Find the Affected Audience

- Do research
- Communicate
- Publicize
- Use alternative languages & media
- Build contacts and partnerships
- Circulate & maintain network

- Consider using a neutral party to find and communicate with those who may be interested in an issue, especially when the issue is controversial.
- Go out into the community and search for groups and individuals, as the people most affected are often the least visible.
- Respect local work schedules when finding people and planning contacts. Be prepared to call or visit at different times to reach key people.



- Consider privacy issues and concerns when inviting opinions or asking for contact information. Always include an “opt out” choice on sign-up sheets.

Work Your Plan

- Develop project-specific mailing and contact lists using all appropriate methods (door-to-door personal contact, telephoning, sign-up sheets at local meetings, return post card mailings).

Involve the Community

- Establish communication mechanisms
- Publicize schedule
- Follow time line & plan
- Track progress & revise
- Overcome barriers
- Follow up

- Communicate a clearly defined reason (goals and objectives) for public involvement, stressing the value you place on the community’s participation.

- Establish communications with the community or affected public using the methods they prefer (electronic mail, printed flyers, mailings, meetings, door-to-door contact, radio, or advertisements in newspapers).

- Advertise your interest through media sources such as the radio, TV, newsletters, and newspapers (use non-English media as well). When possible, include a toll-free contact number.

- Ensure all communications are easy to read (plain English or plain, non-English languages). Include a contact name and number, and provide alternative contacts for non-English speakers.

- Place notices with local government, social, faith-based, and civic organizations and in locations with bulletin boards or kiosks (malls and banks) such as town halls, grocery stores, and senior citizens’ centers.

- Advertise and host your own forums, panels, and meetings (at convenient times and locations), and attend community-hosted events to create interest in involvement activities.

- Use surveys, questionnaires, and scientific sampling to identify those who might be concerned or affected by the issues and involvement activities.

Additional Resources:

Gerald Cormick, Norman Dale, Paul Emond, S. Glenn Sigurdson, and Barry D. Stuart, Building Consensus for a Sustainable Future: Putting Principles into Practice, Ottawa: National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy, 1996, pp.23-33 and 59-77. http://www.nrtee-trnee.ca/Publications/pdf/Book_Building-Consensus_E.pdf

Office of Water, Community Culture and the Environment: A Guide to Understanding a Sense of Place. EPA doc#842-B-01-003, 2002. http://www.epa.gov/eco_community/pdf/cccecomplete.pdf (This file is over 10 megabytes)

Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response, Public Involvement in Environmental Permits: A Reference Guide, EPA doc# 500-R-00-007, 2000. <http://www.epa.gov/permits/publicguide.pdf>

Other EPA Public Involvement Brochures

Introducing EPA’s Public Involvement Policy
How to Plan and Budget for Public Involvement
How to Provide Technical and Financial Assistance for Public Involvement
How to Do Outreach for Public Involvement
How to Consult with and Involve the Public
How to Review and Use Public Input and Provide Feedback
How to Evaluate Public Involvement
How to Improve Public Meetings and Hearings
How to Improve Working with Tribes
How to Involve Environmental Justice Communities
How to Overcome Barriers to Public Involvement

“The issue of identifying stakeholders requires a thoughtful and complete consideration of possible stakeholders, with a full discussion with as many stakeholders as possible about who should be involved and why.”

Dan Dozier - Professional Mediator
 Dialogue on Public Involvement in EPA decisions

